Educational Developments, Societal Conditions and the Secondary School Curriculum in Alberta: An Historial Overview

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Introduction

With Confederation in 1905 Alberta inherited a school organization, a program of studies, and a financing arrangement from the Northwest Territories. The curriculum and textbooks, inspectors and examinations, as well as teacher education and certification were centralized in a department of education under a minister. Locally, an elected board of trustees had the responsibility of building, equipping and operating the school. Outside the cities and towns this usually meant a one-room school incorporating six to eight grades, a young, inexperienced, female teacher, and school funds collected from local property taxes supplemented by small government grants. In the cities graded schools, specialized instruction and high school opportunities developed fairly quickly. The program of studies was academic, bookish, and memory oriented. Although the system was non-demoninational it did allow for schools which were Roman Catholic in teachers, students and trustees, but in which the essential elements of education were controlled by the department of education.

The Early Years

Federal immigration policy, railroad expansion and the development of an early ripening wheat caused settlement to push northward and into "dry" areas. A boom economy during the first decade enhanced by record wheat production and sales meant a rapid increase in population accompanied by the need to supply services and institutions. The department of education was caught in the requirement for more schools and more teachers for a population that was concerned with providing the

basic necessities, that included large numbers of non-English speaking peoples settled in bloc colonies, and that did not place a high monetary value on the work of the teacher. Given problems of this magnitude the curriculum of the school was directed by the need for teachers and by an anglo-saxon fear of the immigrant. Imperialistic content, English-only schools and a classical, literary curriculum at the secondary level were the results.

Although changes to the program of studies before the 1920's have been classed as minor, they indicate the variety of pressures beginning to be experienced by the school system. For example, Greek was added to the high school curriculum in 1912 at the request of the University of Alberta; high school cadet corps were established under the Strathcona Trust Fund for imperialistic reasons; agricultural schools were opened with Federal support by a provincial government needing the farmer vote and believing that homesteaders did not farm efficiently; and vocational and technical courses were added as the economy developed and diversified. The war caused additional problems - in particular less resources and fewer teachers. An already small high school enrollment was further reduced as older students enlisted or did much needed farm work. The department of education reduced the pass mark to 25% in any individual subject for these students, in effect giving academic credit for very practical, unrelated experience.

1920s - the UFA and a Multi-Diploma System

These ad hoc changes, international developments, such as the findings of the Committee of Ten in the U.S., and the widespread belief that the curriculum concentrated on abstract concepts unrelated to practical, everyday life culminated in a wide ranging, thorough overview

of the program of studies. In 1918 the curriculum committee began to devise a questionnaire which was sent to a broad cross section of organizations: to organized farmers, the farm women, women's institutes, teachers' associations, trustee boards, boards of trade, social clubs, and to anyone who had either expressed an interest in education or who had asked for a copy. After the replies had been analyzed and summarized they were then sent to either the elementary or the secondary committee. Both committees included professional educators as well as lay men and women. The secondary school committee submitted its final report in 1923. It recommended fewer subjects and promotion by subject rather than grade in an attempt to alleviate the high failure rate on provincial examinations. It also instituted a six-pronged high school program consisting of matriculation, normal entrance, general, agricultural, commercial and technical diplomas.

This attempt to provide for the academically disinterested student, to supply trained personnel for the industrial sector and to raise the level of education was not successful. Most students who went to high school took either the normal entrance or the matriculation diploma because of the prestige associated with them and because small high schools did not have the ability to offer the others. Generally, the technical diploma students were not trained for the workplace; only the urban high schools had the resources to offer the agricultural program; and the general course, rumored to be a watered down version of the matriculation diploma, was not an acceptable alternative. In 1935, twelve years after the multi-diplomas had been adopted, only 181 of that year's 2,458 graduates were awarded other than a normal entrance or a matriculation diploma. Clearly, and for a variety of reasons the multi-diploma system was not working.

Toward the end of the twenties a second secondary review took place. However, no major changes were recommended and the high school program for the vast majority of students, remained in practise academic, book-oriented and controlled by the ever-present departmental examinations. And yet the world outside the school was changing drastically. No longer a pioneer society Alberta, like the rest of Canada, had survived and matured during the World War. Prohibition, the extension of the suffrage to women, and much social legislation was one outcome. The development of labor unions was another, including in 1918 the Alberta Teachers' Alliance which wanted economic and professional benefits for its members. In particular the ATA wanted control of the professional input to the curriculum decision making process. Farm mechanization, paved and/or graded highways and a trend to urbanization marked the 1920's. So too did the election of a farmer-based government, the United Farmers' of Alberta, the first time Albertans elected a non-traditional government and one that was oriented toward a single sector of the province and the economy. The roaring twenties in Alberta saw draught and recession vie with the automobile and a freer lifestyle. It also witnessed the Turner Valley oil discovery, the extension of radio to isolated, rural residents and in 1929 the stock market collapse.

The school was not immune to these changes and yet the impact on the curriculum was small. Although women had become more active in the society, had made many contributions to the war effort and had been given the vote this was not reflected in the textbooks or the curriculum of the school. Even though prohibition was won and then lost to government control, and the role of the school in a temperate society was said to be important the curriculum on alcohol and drug abuse was neglected. The

ATA's quest for professional input competed with the power of the trustees and the government's concern for keeping costs down and for promoting rural interests. And so suggestions which would improve qualifications for teachers allowing some specialization, and which would establish school divisions enabling larger high schools were vetoed because the rural trustee and the rural farmer were concerned about power, cost and community control. At a time when farm mechanization, a system of highways and the radio were putting rural Albertans in close touch with their urban neighbours; when the discovery of oil and a mixed economy were producing a variety of job opportunities; and when urbanization was increasing, the gap between rural and urban educational opportunities was widening. In 1929 Calgary opened a Technical High School. In 1929 rural Albertans took high school by correspondence, or under the tutellage of an undereducated, overworked one-room, elementary teacher, or they left home to board near a town or city high school. Most did not qualify for high school entrance. And if they did high school instruction was often unavailable, or inappropriate.

1930s - Depression, Social Credit and Major Reform

The school and its curriculum was affected by the economy. Each time there was a recession, or a crop failure the ability of a local area to manage its school was hampered. The devastation in the dry belt areas in the late teens and twenties, the world wide recession of the early twenties and the stock market collapse triggering the depression of the thirties coupled with agricultural failures impacted the schools. Migration from rural areas lowered the population base to support schools; lack of jobs kept students in school longer; and poor financial returns meant that money for resources, teachers and buildings was in short supply. In

effect more students were staying in school longer, and taking an academic program that many thought was impractical.

In 1934 a new curriculum committee was struck. Not only had numerous changes taken place in the society but a whole new field of enquiry - pedagogy - had developed. Psychology, testing and measurement, and curriculum theory with an emphasis on the needs, interests, abilities and purposes of the learner influenced this committee. Again a questionnaire was used which asked "how can we better meet the needs of people of varying interests and capacities?" Respondents were asked to give their opinions on additional subjects, on examinations, on any other changes. This time the committee contacted recent high school graduates asking their views "on the effectiveness of the education they had received." (McNally, p. 66).

The committee came up with a series of recommendations which reflected both the social conditions in the province as well as educational theory:

1. the revised course must take greater account of the needs of the thousands of young people who will never go on to higher education
2. that certain worthwhile experiences must be provided
3. that some way must be found to free the offerings of the small high schools from the overshadowing influence of the matriculation and normal entrance courses
4. that courses included in the new program must be valuable in their own right
5. that there must be a restriction in subject matter content to ensure the teacher some freedom in presentation and to enable the pupil to assimilate with reflection and collateral reading.

(McNally, p. 66)

These recommendations spurred wholesale educational reform. While the UFA government had hesitated to introduce educational change, the Social Credit government elected in 1935 with William Aberhart, a high school teacher and principal, as premier and minister of education and with eleven teachers in the caucus, had no such misgivings. Changes in the organizational structure and the curriculum, were accompanied by an administrative change from district to division and a recognition of the Alberta Teachers' Association as the professional and bargaining voice of all teachers.

An organizational change from an eight year elementary, four year high school to a six year elementary, three year intermediate or junior high school and a three year senior high school paved the way for the curriculum committee's series of recommendations to be translated into the program of studies. The intermediate school was to serve both as a preparatory school for pupils proceeding to high school, and as a "finishing school" for others enabling them to leave school with a sense of accomplishment. A core of instruction for all pupils and elective or exploratory subjects to cater to individual interests and aptitudes were proposed. The core was to include the fundamentals of oral and written English; a comprehensive view of the world through social studies; some knowledge of the rudiments of science; and the practical application of useful concepts in math. The elective or optional courses were to be of three kinds: courses to develop cultural appreciation such as music, art, craftwork; exploratory courses to assess the personal resources of students, including courses in shop, home economics, typing, commercial art; and pre-vocational courses especially adapted to the pupil who would not proceed beyond the junior high.

The new senior high school program was also quite radical. First, one diploma only was awarded regardless of the mixture of courses a student might take. Second, a credit program was introduced where one credit equalled thirty-five minutes of instruction time per week and 100 credits was needed for graduation. A third change occurred in the required core-elective area, where only English, social studies and physical education were required of all students, the other two-thirds of the program to be made up of electives. The elimination of examinations at the Grade X and XI levels and promotion by teacher recommendation was a fourth change. It was believed that this system would allow pupils of varying abilities and interests to obtain a diploma; that it would allow all sizes of high schools to offer some non-academic options; and that academic and non-academic subjects would become a part of every student's high school package. For example, options such as economics, psychology, sociology, dramatics, art, music, typewriting, home economics and industrial arts would now be available to the matriculation or normal entrance student. In effect the new program left it up to the student to choose the courses necessary for his/her own interests. A student going on to university had to be sure to take the necessary matriculation courses, while the student interested in commerce or the technical area had different choices to make. Some schools found that the students needed counselling and the curriculum committee recommended in 1938 that a new "general elective" known as Vocations and Guidance, to provide guidance in problems of adolescent personality and vocational orientation be offered. They also approved a proposal to make the teaching of oral and written English a cooperative responsibility which all teachers would share.

These curricula changes, along with the introduction of the divisional scheme and the recognition of the ATA had the potential to improve the secondary school offerings throughout the province. Such improvement did not immediately occur however. An effective junior high program required teachers with a knowledge of the psychology of adolescence, with specialized teaching certificates and with backgrounds in diagnosis and guidance. It also required a school plant equipped with libraries, labs, shops, a gymnasium and an auditorium. For most schools in the province, even for those in urban areas where a larger school population, better facilities and more highly qualified teachers were found, these requirements were difficult to meet.

At the senior high level despite the 'new' single diploma, most schools concentrated on the academic subjects: tradition, the prestige of certain subject matter, the vested interests of teachers, the entrance requirements of professional schools and the perceived disciplinary value of subjects like Latin worked together to resist change. As well in a very depressed economy these traditional subjects required less in the way of space, resources and equipment than did some of the newer subjects. Perhaps, children and their parents sought financial security via the professions and white collar jobs, areas that required academic courses, not technical and vocational ones. For all of these reasons the academic nature of the school remained paramount.

1940s and 1950s - War, Reconstruction and a Royal Commission

Before the new program had been in existence long enough to give it a fair trial World War II had broken out and as during World War I the school and the curriculum were effected. On the positive side the economy turned around and brought the province out of the depression, suggesting

in theory at least that more money would be available for the educational system. In practise, the effect of the war on the school was not so positive. Experienced secondary teachers enlisted or found better paying positions in support of the war effort. Resources and equipment necessary for vocational and technical programs were not available. School bus operations and the construction of regional/composite high schools were curtailed because of a lack of manpower and materials. Students left high school without a diploma to take readily available jobs.

Curriculum planners were caught in a tough situation. For the new program to be successful a broad range of courses needed to be offered, time was required in the school to create a meaningful educative experience, to relate the curriculum to the realities of present-day life and living, and a non-traditional focus was necessary to educate for democracy. A dearth of well educated, experienced, progressive thinking teachers was one problem. A second was the overcrowded timetable which meant that little or no time was available for social activities, guidance or student couselling. H. C. Newland, Supervisor of Schools and chair of the general curriculum committee, commented that ... "if we want a new social order after the war we must begin to build it now ... we must begin now to plan our school programmes for democratic uses, and to plan them in a democratic manner." (Annual Report, 1941, p. 20).

Newland proposed curriculum study groups within the ATA, Home and School Associations and other social organizations as a way of getting democratic input and support for curriculum revision. Four areas of study with questions for each were outlined: fundamental objectives, basic principles, technical procedures and subject matter concerns. A question in the area of fundamental objectives was to what extent does the

subsistence of a democratic social order depend on its system and program of education? Under the basic principles heading, it was asked whether the high school should provide education for all adolescent pupils, of low as well as high mental ability. Should the high-school program be of three years or of four years was a sample of the kind of question under technical procedures, and specific subject matter questions such as do we need a new course in General Mathematics or in General Science were found in the fourth area proposed for study.

One of the results of these study groups was a proposal to introduce a four year high school program. It was argued that the English and Social Studies programs really required four years to do effectively; that 68% of the students who graduate take four years; and that this would allow time for adequate training for democracy through "social living, more physical and social activities and more opportunities for experience rather than mere knowledge." (Annual Report, 1943, pp. 15-17). The labor shortage, the extra cost to the system and to parents, and the need for practical training outside the school especially in a period of 'reconstruction' after the war were arguments used to retain the three year high school. Despite almost unanimous approval by the revision committee the four year proposal was quietly forgotten in the exigencies of the end of the war and the beginning of post-war activity.

The curriculum work and review which occurred throughout the 1940s could be classed as tinkering. New textbooks were devised, courses of study were upgraded, new courses were introduced and acceptance for locally inspired course material was given. These changes were not fundamental changes to the 1936/37 secondary school program and there is indication that in the short run the revision was not that successful. For

example, in the junior high school bracket, some grades were still a part of an eight grade elementary school, and often the elective courses were compulsory because of the lack of optional subjects being taught. Despite an increased high school enrollment, a one diploma program, regional and composite high schools and a philosophy that included education for a democracy the academic program continued its tight rein on the system. The high schools generally failed in providing a technical, vocational program for a good portion of adolescents. For example, in an agricultural province agricultural courses were not available; students who enrolled in Grade X technical and vocational courses did not continue on into more advanced courses in these areas; and a great many dropped out before qualifying for the diploma.

The fifties were a problematic time for an educational system. Leduc had come in, the baby boom children were reaching school age, immigration and industrialization were increasing. The school system had a difficult time finding space, teachers and courses for an ever larger group of students. In addition there was widespread belief that progressive educational ideas had affected schools adversely. In 1957 the Soviet Union launched Sputnik confirming in the mind of the public that North American schools, including Alberta's, were inadequate. The province appointed a Royal Commission on Education, the Cameron Commission, to assess the system of education in the province and to formulate recommendations for the future. The vast majority of comments to the commission concerned the curriculum and its perceived lack of intellectual rigor. Standards were too low, matriculation preparation was inadequate, and some courses were considered 'frills' were the kinds of comments made. That only six per cent of the students enrolled in high school proceeded to university and

yet every local high school had to offer the matriculation package to the detriment of other programs was another problem. Although 110 subjects had been outlined and authorized by the department in academic, commercial, shop, home economics, cultural and general areas, choice for the student tended to be very limited, by virtue of the size of the high school and the requirements of individual university faculties.

The Cameron Commission's recommendations reflected past educational practises as well as the society of the fifties. The recommendations had two general foci. An emphasis on specified content, drill, examinations and mastery of information was suggested to counteract the influences of progressive educational ideas. A curriculum that was geared to the interests of the learners, to flexibility, to informality and to freedom was thought to have caused a weakening in the academic and knowledge component of the high school program. A second foci was on the school's role in manpower training. The industrial needs of the society and the trend to more students going on to high school resulted in recommendations that favoured specialization in fine arts, business education and many vocational fields. These two general foci fared very differently in the decade of the sixties. The commission also recomended that the Educational Planning Commission study the school year structure, in particular the divided school year or the semester system as a means of facilitating the larger and more varied school population of the post-war years and to allow year round use of the physical facilities. This recommendation also had a different outcome in the sixties.

1960s and 1970s - More Money, More Students, More Programs

The 1960s was a decade of prosperity and change; a decade of youth and of rights movements; a decade of changing moral and sexual

standards. It was a time of unconventional behavior, of rebellion against accepted norms, traditions and authority. Specified content, memorization of a body of knowledge, drill and factual examinations were not the curriculum needs of the sixties. Progressive theories which stressed process rather than content, understanding rather than factual knowledge, and flexibility rather than rigidity became acceptable. Ideas which were first introduced in the thirties, denied in the forties and fifties, became the educational watchwords of the sixties.

Change was also evident in the attitude toward education's role in the society. Governments began talking about the return on educational dollars; publishing and other major corporations produced resource kits and teaching packages; teachers became better educated and their salaries and working conditions improved; and the modern school plant was built to embody changing and varied student populations and activities. The semester system became more widespread as schools adapted the flexibility of semesters to their own needs and philosophy of learning. Some only semestered in certain subjects and/or certain grades while others operated a complete semester scheme. Although year round schooling was a possibility most jurisdictions adopted two four and one-half month terms keeping intact the traditional summer vacation.

The interest by economists in education's role in the gross national product, in the private sector's cry for a better trained workforce, and in the government's need to both relieve unemployment and to expand the economy produced the Technical and Vocational Training Assistance Act in 1960. Under this act extensive funds were available to upgrade facilities for technical and vocational training, a goal which had been recommended by the Cameron Commission. Three decades after the high school revision

of 1936, and only with the financial assistance of the federal government did the province really begin to provide a high school education for non-academically interested students. The number of courses and fields expanded, composite high schools with large vocational components were built, and junior vocational schools became acceptable. Programs in as many as twenty-four fields ranging from agricultural mechanics and data processing to forestry trades and radio and television repair were introduced. The schools began to reflect in courses and programs the many opportunities and possibilities of the Albertan society.

By 1965 teaching specialities included areas such as music, home economics, shop, physical education and kindergarten. A wide range of specialized teachers in commercial, vocational and agricultural areas were needed. There were teachers for the blind, deaf, physically and mentally handicapped and for New Canadians. Department heads, supervisors of special subjects, teacher consultants, supervisors, superintendents and educational administrators were found in the school systems and/or the department of education. Specialist Councils of teachers were formed, particularly in academic subjects. The education system had become professionalized.

The interest of the government in education, the public monies allocated to it and the expectation of what education could accomplish produced conflicting messages. On the one hand public expenditure and public expectation put pressure on the school to be a panacea for all the ills of society including what was perceived as a loss of traditional values; on the other hand money for education meant that new ideas and practices could be attempted, ideas which advocated individuality, freedom, and which questioned traditional courses and methodology. In the middle were

the high school youth caught between the society's growing secularization and emphasis on materialism as wealth and urbanization increased, and the voters' nostalgic yearning for the values which had brought Albertans through two world wars and a financial depression.

The Alberta of 1970 was a vastly changed province from the one upon which the Cameron Commission of 1959 had been based. A new commission, chaired by Walter N. Worth was authorized to report on the educational system for the seventies and beyond. "A Choice of Futures" was published in 1972 and it reflected in its recommendations both the changing social and economic climate of the late sixties and early seventies as well as more sophisticated trends in educational development. Specialized schools, variety in programs, community schools, parental involvement, and student advisory councils were some of the suggestions. To give teachers and students more room for individual growth, and to reflect educational research which advocated that students analyze, synthesize and criticize, departmental examinations came into disfavor. Better educated teachers would assess more accurately and fairly their own students. Expo 67, the Quebec crisis and a resurgence in nationalism were reflected in pleas for more Canadian content, for bilingualism, and in Alberta particularly, for a multicultural emphasis.

Equal educational opportunity was a watchword of the seventies and this was particularly noticeable in the education of the handicapped. From an earlier reliance on segregation in special schools and classes the trend became one of mainstreaming many of these students at least for a part of their program. Equal educational opportunity meant unequal use of resources, facilities and teachers. It meant that parents and others perceiving lack of progress of their own children began to demand more

for them. It also meant that children with varying kinds of disabilities including learning disabled children, began to receive more attention. These changes in attitude caused an adjustment in curricula, methodology, and teacher certification. Few regular classroom teachers had the education or experience to deal with the handicapped and some people began to argue that mainstreaming was being carried out at the expense of the average student. Parents of students who formerly had attended private schools, or had gone to Manitoba or British Columbia under provincial agreements, or had dropped out of school functionally illiterate demanded and began to receive special programs, classes and schools for these students with handicaps. Equal educational opportunity had come a little closer to being a reality. The academically advantaged student, however, did not profit from this interest in equality. To date little attention has been paid to these "special" students.

While the Worth Commission was collecting its findings on cradle to grave education in Alberta the social studies curriculum was undergoing a major revision. Since 1936 social studies had held a favored place in the program of studies in Alberta with the belief that it would give future citizens an adequate understanding of the complex society in which we live. By 1970 that society had become complex indeed and many were of the opinion that its institutions were crumbling. The unconventionality of the sixties, the rebellion against authority and traditional values, and the increasing rate of marital breakdown, drugs and alcohol consumption and rising crime statistics caused concern. A boom economy, a rapidly increasing population and a changing technology made the Alberta society of the seventies unstable. It was thought that the society could regain something of the proven traditions of established institutions through the

school. A perennial faith in schooling and hope for our youth seems to have been more the burden of the social studies curriculum than of other subject areas. A value oriented curriculum which would give students the means for making considered and consistent choices was introduced. The new social studies aimed at developing "valuing skills," at dealing with "what ought to be," at learning how to make decisions and at how to make the future world a more ideal place. Some criticized this as wishy-washy, with the students deciding for themselves right and wrong. A course devised as a means of reestablishing traditional values appeared to many to be doing just the opposite. One might also question the wisdom of expecting one course - social studies, and one age group - our youth, to right the perceived wrongs of a turbulent era.

With a wide variety of courses, options and programs to choose from, with provincial examinations no longer required, with student and parent dialogue a part of the process, with factual knowledge undermined, with a high school curriculum that had something for everyone and school plants that delivered the curriculum using all the technology that society had developed the schools in the early seventies appeared to be unlike their counterparts of the preceding generations. And yet traditional concerns were surfacing. Rumblings about the quality of the educational enterprise became more persistent. Businesspeople said graduates could not spell, the universities complained that incoming students were unable to write effectively, and the public decried the lack of basic, factual knowledge. A "back to the basics" cry became persistent. Universities devised effective writing tests for all incoming students, and the province began the process of re-introducing departmental examinations. This concern about educational standards coincided with the crest of the boom in

Alberta's economy. It would appear again that as the society underwent a period of stress and change, the schools (and particularly the high schools) were thought to have contributed to the uncertainty by not maintaining a more traditional atmosphere.

Conclusion

With the bloom off Alberta's economy and a new Canadian Constitution with a Bill of Rights, the eighties brought different challenges to the province and its school system; and a new review of the curriculum, this one on the secondary program particularly. As one looks back over the present century a distinct pattern emerges that links societal change and development in educational research to curriculum modification and diversification. This pattern of development suggests a number of implications as one looks ahead to the late eighties and the nineties. First, over the course of eighty years the curriculum has changed from an academic, intellectual education for entrance to the universities and professions and which appealed to a small proportion of the population to a program which prepared students for the workforce, for living in a complex society, for entrance to colleges and technical schools as well as universities. It is now a program directed at a broad spectrum of youth in the society and which includes education in areas that had previously been the forte of other societal institutions, such as the family, and the church. A horizontal increase has occurred as more members of the age group began to attend high school; a vertical increase has been caused by students staying in school for longer periods of time; and a lateral expansion has taken place as the school was expected to provide broader opportunities for its pupils. The secondary school curriculum has undergone incremental change over the years as it has continually been

expected to do more and more for larger proportions of the age group. The implication is that this trend will continue.

More students, longer periods of time, and more varied programs are only one aspect of this incremental change. The other is that this growth was accompanied by a change to a more complex society presenting the high school with an increasingly more difficult role. Pioneer society was simple. The school's duty was to teach the three r's and the values of duty, courage, honesty and obedience. In a more complex, secular, pluralistic society there is no such agreement on values or on what is right and wrong. To be functionally literate in today's society means to be competent in a variety of areas, to be able to understand other cultures and attitudes and to have the ability to adapt as the world changes. In a society driven by technology the man-machine interface is of critical concern. The high school must prepare all its students to live in tomorrow's society, perhaps a much more difficult task than is generally realized.

A second theme has been that of the role of national and international developments. Both professional educators and the public have acted because of ideas, changes, concerns that happened outside Alberta. Whether it was Ontario's academic, imperialistic curriculum in the early years, John Dewey's progressive philosophy, the Russian Sputnik in 1957, or the federal government's concern over unemployment and economic development in the sixties the school has undergone change in connection with these events. Sometimes these changes were warranted by conditions in Alberta, but not always as for example the introduction of industrial and technical courses for an urban economy when the West was very much an agricultural area. Or the converse of this, the difficulty with courses

in agriculture - a course not popular in other, more metropolitan jurisdictions. The message of this theme is that the curriculum is effected by events and developments outside of the province as well as within and that the school system has the task of preparing students to be citizens of the world as well as of Alberta.

Although education is a provincial responsibility in Canada and each province protects that control assiduously nevertheless the federal government has had an impact on the curriculum. Using Section 91 of the British North America Act, which gave the federal government control over industry, trade and commerce, a Royal Commission was appointed in 1910 to inquire into industrial training and technical education. The result was more provincial attention in the areas of agricultural and technical programs and schools. Again, the interest in the economy in 1960 produced the Vocational and Technical Training Assistance Act which provided Alberta the facilities and equipment needed to offer a high school education for the non-academically interested student. The focus on bilingualism and biculturalism and the resulting royal commission effected the curriculum in the area of french language instruction, and eventually resulted in a multicultural focus in Alberta. The implication is that the federal government although excluded from jurisdiction in education nevertheless does wield influence.

Fourth, local input and attitude have been very important to both policy making and implementation. That input sometimes tends to be contradictory, resistive and subversive. It is often naively expressed and yet a public educational system must respond to the needs/desires of the public. The 'Back to the Basics Movement' is a good example. How basic, how backward one might ask. Examination statistics and inspectors

reports from earlier years certainly complain about students' ability to write at a time when few students went on to high school. Today, when most students do so should the school be expected to have all students competent in skills which a few years ago very few mastered? How do computers and computered assisted learning fit this movement? Latin is not one of the basics that is advocated and yet perhaps knowledge of latin might be a help in working with computer languages.

Connected with local input is the role of organizations outside the school, like the United Farm Women, or the Trades and Labor Congress, or the Right to Life Coalition. Each group may be very organized, and very vocal and yet only represent a small proportion of the public. A curriculum unduly influenced in this way may not meet the needs of the majority of the population. At the same time these 'outside the school' groups may have performed the service of a national office or a national system of education. Many of these organizations had a framework which linked local and provincial units with a national body which co-ordinated activities. Lobbying of provincial departments of education by provincial locals of national organizations may have helped effect curricula change nationally. The IODE and the temperance curriculum, women's institutes and domestic science, and Expo 67 and Canadian studies are examples of national controversy effecting provincial curricula decisions. Cultural conflict, like the use of drugs, or the place of religion in public schools, or sexual morality, is in reality curriculum conflict. And it is often promulgated by national organizations through their local affiliates. This may help explain why certain curricula changes have occured simultaneously across the country.

Another theme that impinges on curriculum development and implementation is that educational reform is a slow process. It takes time

for a new or radical idea to be accepted by the public, to be implemented at the local level. Social, political, economic, technological and educational conditions need to merge for a fundamental change to occur. A political party or the government in power may not give education high priority; economic conditions may not allow needed reforms to be carried out; perhaps advances in technology are such that a certain program is not feasible; or the public is not ready for school change. Anyone of these may take precedence over what appears in theory at least to be a good pedagogical idea.

The history of the curriculum describes a struggle over the issue of "what knowledge is of the most worth." From the "classical knowledge for its own sake" proponents to "work centered reformers," to those who advocated individual child development the curriculum has swung back and forth. Alternating cycles of subject-centered versus child-centered learning have occurred and can be associated with the changing political and social climate of the century. Throughout these cycles how much stability was maintained and how much change actually occurred is clouded by the presence of the classroom door, by the inability to control or even to know what happens inside the classroom. Teachers tend to modify or interpret curricula direction and guides according to their own experience and education and the circumstances of their classroom. Although teachers have sometimes been accused of entrenchment in curriculum matters they may also act as filters where indiscriminate change is concerned. This suggests that policy formulation is only one step in the process of curriculum decision-making.

Theodore Sizer, in commenting about the American high school, observes that as an organization it has changed little over this century:

that students are grouped by age; content is organized by departments; the primary methodology is the lecture; the unit of time is something under an hour; the school year is from Labour Day to mid-June; and accomplishment is measured in terms of credits earned and time spent. (Sizer, 1984). Except for a few experimental areas the same can be said for the Alberta high school. Further, the program with the most prestige, the program that is the center of most secondary schools, and the program that attracts the bright, upwardly mobile student and his/her parent is the matriculation program. This perhaps suggests that despite pedagogical developments, and social, political and economic changes the secondary school curriculum has exhibited a stubborn continuity within its academic core. Around that core and peripheral to it the fluctuating demands of the society for more education for a broader proportion of the population have been more or less delivered over the years by means of an organization and methodology that has not changed in fifty years.

The society, however, and the purpose of the high school have changed. Besides a concentration on educational activities the high school, which has become virtually universal, also has a sociological focus. In an institution which is committed to equality of educational opportunity, if not social equality, these two functions vie for attention and are often at odds with one another. The challenge to reformers is to reconcile the educational and social roles of an institution serving a widely different population in terms of abilities and backgrounds, and to prepare that population for both today and the unknown society of tomorrow.

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